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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8525  
INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE  
RUEHAO/AMCONSUL CURACAO 1062  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1566  
RUEHGT/AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA 0021  
RUCNDT/USMISSION US IN NEW YORK NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 000442

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y ADDING DECLAS DATE

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/14/2016

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SUBJECT: SURINAME FOREIGN MINISTER EXPLAINS CARICOM'S BACKING OF  
VENEZUELA IN SECURITY COUNCIL BID

REF: PARAMARIBO 000679

Classified by Ambassador Marsha E. Barnes, reasons 1.4 (b)  
and (d).

¶1. (U) Suriname's Minister of Foreign Affairs Lygia Kraag-Keteldijk said in a radio interview aired July 14 that CARICOM had chosen to back Venezuela in its bid for a non-permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council. Kraag-Keteldijk said CARICOM members carefully considered the pros and cons of supporting either Guatemala or Venezuela, but in the end reached a consensus on backing Venezuela. When asked if the long-standing border dispute between Guyana and Venezuela was a consideration, Kraag-Keteldijk stated that CARICOM had showed its QstrengthQ by still being able to reach a consensus, despite one member country having a problem with Venezuela.

¶2. (U) Commenting on the consequences of this decision for further cooperation with the United States, Kraag-Keteldijk said that CARICOM is an independent regional organization with its own foreign policy objectives. She added that it is hoped that the United States respects this and reacts in a rational manner.

COMMENT

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¶3. (C) We are struck by the Minister's public presentation of unanimity surrounding CARICOM's position versus President Venetiaan's more nuanced version of the current state of play. (See reftel). It is unlikely that this disparity represents a split in understanding between the President and Minister (she has been his close, trusted adviser for years), but rather a possible tool to cement a CARICOM consensus by making it publicly awkward and difficult for any undecided countries to take an opposing view.

BARNES